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SUBJECT: RWANDAN HIGH COMMISSIONER ON RAILS, EAC, ICTR

¶1. SUMMARY: In an introductory meeting February 10, newly arrived Rwandan High Commissioner Fatuma Ntangiza told Ambassador Lenhardt of Rwanda's priority of linking to the port of Dar es Salaam by rail. She described progress and challenges of East African Community (EAC) integration and lamented the slow pace of trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Ntangiza stressed Rwanda's commitment to improving its business climate and moving away from aid dependency. END SUMMARY.

East African Railways

¶2. Ambassador Ntangiza said President Kagame's initiative for a Kigali-Isaka-Dar es Salaam rail line had been the impetus for current plans for rail upgrades throughout East Africa. Interest in the project intensified during food and fuel supply shortages in 2008 during the period of election violence in Kenya. Ntangiza said Uganda's President Museveni was interested in connecting to the port at Tanga via Arusha, as well as a northern corridor linking Kampala and Mombasa. Now the whole East African Community (EAC) is interested and trying to harmonize efforts. She said the EAC expects to mobilize resources this year and begin construction by 2011, with completion expected by 2014. Ambassador Ntangiza shared that the GOR worries the broader EAC project might delay their critical central corridor link to the port of Dar Es Salaam, and is proposing that section be prioritized. She emphasized the importance of the project in deepening economic integration, scaling up trade and investment, and providing alternatives for land-locked countries. Ambassador Lenhardt agreed, noting the benefits of rail vs. trucks in terms of cost, energy use, and environmental impact. In response to Ambassador Ntangiza's query about whether the US is committing any resources to the effort, he said the GOT must take the lead and prioritize among their many competing development needs. He added that the GOT must decide soon whether to repair or upgrade parts of the central line washed out by recent flooding.

EAC

¶3. Ntangiza observed that Rwanda and Burundi joined the EAC (in 2007) because they felt more connected socially and economically to East than to Central Africa. She said the GOR's challenge is to sensitive the Rwandan population about what the reforms mean, in order to keep up with the pace of harmonization. She said there has been great progress in that East Africans no longer require visas or work permits within the EAC, but that challenges remain, such as the fact that Rwandan border

posts operate 24 hours, while many neighbors do not. Ambassador Lenhardt agreed harmonization would take time and assured Ndagiza he had recommended sustained U.S. support for the EAC.

ICTR

14. Ndagiza criticized the court for the slow pace of its work, especially considering its high level of donor funding. While the court had set an important precedent for accountability of primary genocide perpetrators, during the time ICTR completed 46 cases ordinary courts in Rwanda have tried 50,000 "genocidaires," while the traditional "gacaca" courts have completed 700,000, with a fraction of the resources. Ndagiza observed that ICTR officials are always asking for more time, rather than focusing on completing more trials in a timely fashion. She complained of ICTR's reluctance to transfer cases to Rwanda, although the GOR had invited ICTR to train local prosecutors, built new mode2j28W92,78%`% Q%Qh-kqRf{jD Noting that discussions are still ongoing about where to house the court's archives after its closure, she argued that a transfer to Kigali would provide an opportunity for ordinary Rwandans to access the archives and for visitors to learn a great lesson on accountability.

Doing Business

15. Ambassador Lenhardt complimented Rwanda for the dramatic improvement in its World Bank "Doing Business" ranking. Ndagiza explained the GOR had set up a Rwanda Development Board, through which all procedures such as business licensing, tax registration and land titling were centralized such that a new business could be established within 24 hours. She described the introduction of performance contracts at the local and national government level; these clearly define expected results, are evaluated quarterly, and have resulted in improved social service delivery, greater transparency and increased accountability.

The U.S. and Africa

16. Ambassador Lenhardt explained to Ndagiza President Obama's vision of Africa as important to the world and as a strategic partner, not a dependant. He noted the President's food security and global health initiatives and Secretary Clinton's focus on gender issues. Ambassador Lenhardt expressed admiration for Rwanda's empowerment of women leaders, an issue he is promoting in Tanzania. Ndagiza stated Rwanda is looking forQ to moving away from aid, and that Rwandans are proud when people invest in their country rather than give "hand-outs".

LENHARDT